GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PANCHAYATI RAJ
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1507
ANSWERED ON:22.08.2007
STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT SYSTEMS
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Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) Whether the Indian delegation has recently visited Pakistan to discuss issues pertaining to the history, functioning and legal framework of Indian and Pakistani local self-Government systems;

(b) if so, the outcome of the discussion held with Pakistani counterpart to empower the local self-Government; and

(c) the steps taken up by Government to strengthen the local self-Government systems in the country ?

Answer

MINISTRY OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR)

(a): Yes Sir. The Indian delegation led by Minister of Panchayati Raj visited Pakistan from the 1st July to the 3rd July 2007.

(b): The Pakistan India Joint Working Group on Local Governance (JWG) met on the sidelines of the Pakistan-India Symposium on the 2nd July, 2007 and recommended the following activities for consideration of the Forum in consultation with the respective Governments:

(i) The two sides will continue to share their evolving experience particularly with a view to facilitating people to people contact in the areas such as: - Outcomes of local Government system in Pakistan and India − Achievements and Challenges ahead; Fiscal decentralization, fiscal capacity and financial management at the local level; Decentralised planning; Economic development through local Government, including rural-urban integration; and Women, Youth and Citizen empowerment including capacity building and training.

(ii) To facilitate these exchanges Pakistan and India should each host one meeting each year, besides arranging face-to-face encounters in each others' country of elected representatives to local self-government institutions.

(iii) All stakeholders, including elected representatives, think tanks, government officials, academia, researchers and civil society representatives should be invited to these meetings to share and disseminate best practices and innovations in service delivery at the local level.

(iv) Best practices and innovations should be regularly shared between the two countries through the National Reconstruction Bureau in Pakistan and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in India.

(v) Stakeholders will be encouraged to exchange views on issues surrounding local governance and to participate in action research and in developing comparative studies.

(vi) Experts and officials on local governance from both the countries should be invited, under an Exchange Programme, to participate as Resource Persons in the Academies, Schools and Institutions in Pakistan and India, to impart training and disseminate emerging developments in the field of local governance.

(c): The first task before the Ministry was to evolve a national consensus in respect of the Roadmap for Panchayati Raj through mutual consultation between the Centre and the States. Ministry of Panchayati Raj convened Seven Round Tables of State Panchayati Raj Ministers with the Union Minister of Panchayati Raj between July and December 2004. The deliberations centered on the 18 identified dimensions of Panchayati Raj ranging from the effective Devolution of the Functions, Finances and Functionaries to District Planning, Training and Capacity Building and IT-enabled e-governance. At the conclusion of each Round Table, nearly 150 action points comprised in the Compendium were unanimously adopted by all Panchayati Raj Ministers and referred to Chief Ministers for their approval. This has become a National Roadmap for effective Panchayati Raj. Further, the Minister (Panchayati Raj) has visited 23 States and Union Territories and signed a joint declaration with the respective Chief Ministers of States setting forth the path to full empowerment of Panchayats.

The Ministry of Panchayati Raj is continually interacting with the State Governments to ascertain the effectiveness of PRIs. A Committee of Panchayati Raj Secretaries was constituted to monitor the progress and implementation of these 150 Action Points. This Committee of Secretaries headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj would also service the Council of Panchayati Raj Ministers. The Committee of Secretaries has held nine meetings. The Council of Ministers has been convened thrice, at Kochi, Kerala

i n August 2005, at Bhubaneshwar, Orissa in June 2006 and at Thiruvananthpuram, Kerala in August 2007, respectively. The Empowered Sub-Committee of National Development Council also reviews the progress of implementation of the provision of the Constitution during its meetings, which are held periodically.